

THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART

RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK 2014

The Scene of a Crime

*a text piece published by the artists' writing journal
2HB vol. 10 in 2011*

Submitted by Laura González
Output No. 3



OUTPUT

The Scene of a Crime is a text piece, which was published in 2HB vol. 10 in 2011. 2HB is a peer reviewed journal focusing on artists' writing and published by the Centre for Contemporary Arts in Glasgow.

The Scene of a Crime follows a woman on her way to work. She takes a detour through a nineteenth century shopping arcade containing solely jewellery outlets. On the day we follow her, however, a diamond ring speaks to her. *The Scene of a Crime* records this dialogue and her exit from and subsequent re-entry into the symbolic order.

The work is seven pages long and an earlier version forms part of chapter three of my PhD degree at Sheffield Hallam University, which I completed in 2010.

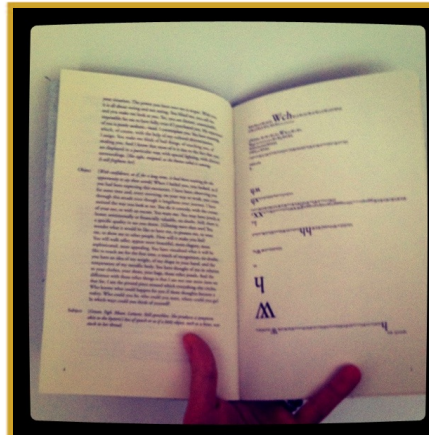


Image one: photograph showing the text piece pages as printed in the journal.

Title
The Scene of a Crime

Submission No.
3

Authors/Creators
Dr Laura González

CONTEXT

This text piece was developed as part of a project studying the workings of seduction. In the contextual framework of the research, I defined seduction as the getting of another to do what we want, not by force of coercion, but by the exercise of their own, though often mistaken or misguided, free will. I organised the extant research on seduction into four categories: seduction as principle, phenomenon, process or practice, and concentrated on the last one.

I also developed four rules of seduction two of which are relevant to *The Scene of a Crime*. First, that only objects seduce, this rule has been best articulated by Jean Baudrillard in *Fatal Strategies*: ‘only the subject desires; only the object seduces’. Seduction and desire are not discrete terms, but continuous with each other. They relate to each other as if part of a moëbius strip, a topological surface with one single side and only one boundary component. As the two sides are continuous, a cross over, from inside to outside and back is possible. However, when one passes a finger round the surface of the moëbius strip, it is

impossible to say at which precise point the crossing has taken place. To paraphrase Slavoj Žižek, seduction is not a simple reverse of content, ‘we encounter it when we progress far enough on the side’ of desire itself. Seduction, in and through Jacques Lacan’s *objet petit a* – the object cause of desire, not the object which desire is directed to, but that which provokes desire –, seduces desire and then moves on.

The second rule applicable to this output is that that seduction is pervasive, it will seduce everything, including (or specially) someone trying to study it. Therefore, as part of the research, it became apparent that the problem of studying seduction from within, while being seduced, had to be overcome. For this reason, the contribution of my project is a self-reflexive methodology enabling this (see below).

The context for the research is multiform, interdisciplinary and is located in converging fields concerned with textual and visual material: eighteenth-century



Image two: detail of ‘Gucci’ a photographic work related to *The Scene of a Crime*.

CONTEXT

libertine novels, in particular *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* and the writings of the Marquis de Sade; Giacomo Casanova's memoirs; Frank Sinatra's peculiar arrest in 1938; Sigmund Freud's abandonment of the seduction theory; Søren Kierkegaard's games between Johannes and Cordelia; Karl Marx's commodity fetishism; Naia del Castillo's works, which are linked to Surrealist concerns, and Jacques Lacan's mysterious *objet petit a*, as mentioned above. All these play a part in delineating seduction and the self-reflexive methodology.

My own (nearly missed) encounter with a work of art, Marcel Duchamp's *Étant donnés*, and a bold shoe in a New York shop window were used as support for the writing, together with the occasional appearances of a detective at the end of the text and in other manifestations (see dissemination), providing the forensic gaze required of my investigation.



Image three: At the Medical Museion in Copenhagen, with the hysteric's belt.

METHODOLOGY

The self-reflexive methodology is the main contribution my project on seduction made. It is comprised of three steps: First, recognition: for recognition—the seduction per se—to take place, the subject has to identify, see and accept herself within the object, or the object as a part of herself that is beyond herself, a surplus. It is in this recognition that the psychodynamic elements of seduction begin to take place and the imaginary awakens to the possibilities seduction offers. For this to happen—and, by extension, for recognition to occur—the subject has to position herself in such a way as to be able to see herself through the other. Real and imaginary worlds, just like seduction and desire, have to enter into a reversible relation.

Second, capture: Capture in this context refers to two processes: the literal capture of the subject by the object (part of the process of seduction) and the recording of this operation (part of the method of studying seduction).

Last, reflection: While the other two steps are relatively descriptive, reflection is the

most difficult one to complete. But it is the one that will ascertain that seduction did happen, through relating the recognition and capture to the context in which seduction operates. The framework for this analysis comes from various sources, from the psychoanalytic free association, and evenly-hovering-attention to that developed by the artist Daniel Spoerri in *An Anecdoted Topography of Chance*.

The Scene of a Crime represents the second variation of the capture, the recording of the fall, in order to study seduction. It is the distancing device which allows for the work of analysis to be done. The self-reflexive methodology can be developed in a variety of methods. For my project, I tested both writing and photography (for examples of photographic capture, see images two and four on this portfolio). Writing was developed as a method following the literary works of Choderlos de Laclos, Marquis de Sade and Giacomo Casanova, the philosophical devices of Kirkegaard and the reflexive, sociological studies of Malcolm Ashmore.



Image four: detail of 'Tiffany' a photographic work related to *The Scene of a Crime*.

METHODOLOGY

The dialogue, by the way, was constructed in front of the photographs as they were exhibited and in front of the objects, that is, written standing up in Argyll Arcade and other shop windows, much to the disturbance of the security guards there who could not understand the relation between my wet eyes and my working pen. The writing of the dialogue was, therefore, not a wholly personal enterprise. Even if subjective, it gives body to Karl Marx's thought *if commodities could speak...*, only mentioned as a footnote in *Capital*. I attempted to see what a commodity would say if it spoke.

Feminist intellectual Françoise Collin already used this strategy when she wrote 'to write is to enter into seduction'. Yet, there are some writings that are more conducive to this—among others: letters, detective stories, dialogues, case expositions, witness accounts—as they address and involve the reader quite directly, and allow for her to be recognised in them. There is also, of course, a questioning of the text itself through its form: this is the exit from the symbolic.

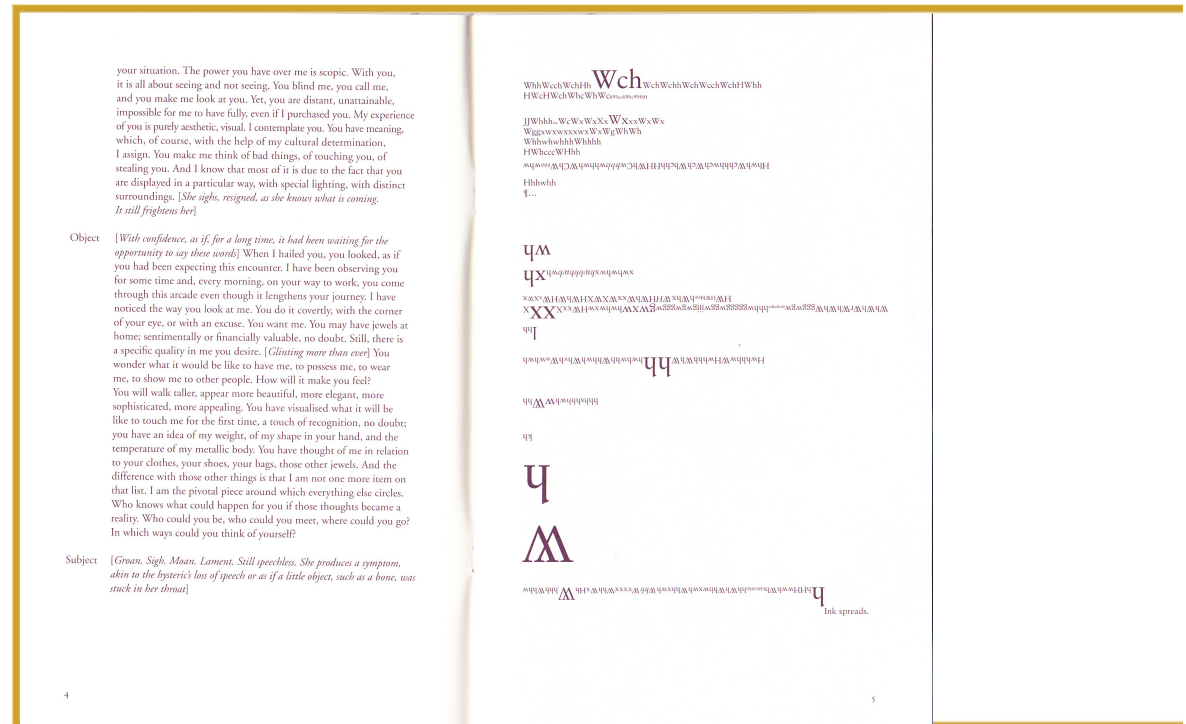


Image four: page spread from *The Scene of a Crime*, when the text exists the symbolic.

DISSEMINATION

The Scene of a Crime and its surrounding work (photographs and theoretical context) was shown at three conferences in 2010. On 5 June, I presented a paper entitled 'Make me yours: studying the psychodynamics of seduction through works of art', at the *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society* conference, at Middlesex University. This conference contribution provided an overview of the methodology and its workings.

This was followed by 'Stranger, Seducer', presented at *Transmission: Hospitality* (Sheffield Hallam University) on the 3 July. For this event, I proposed a panel entitled 'Art and the Stranger', exploring seduction and the act of listening. I invited fellow artist Nicky Bird and writer Bran Nicol. Our panel was chaired by Professor Dany Nobus, who also gave a keynote speech. Other keynotes were Juliet Flower MacCannell, Blake Stimson, Ahuvia Kahane, Ester Leslie, and Clegg and Guttman. My paper is available from the conference proceedings website: <http://extra.shu.ac.uk/transmission/transproc2.html>

The third paper disseminating this output is 'Seduction captured', delivered at *The Social Life Of Methods*, the 6th annual conference of the ESRC Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change, 31 August to 3 September 2010, at St Hugh's College in Oxford. For this conference, I explored the role of writing and photography within the methodology.

The performative form of the piece and, in particular, one paragraph of text, has inspired my recent work. This is the paragraph: '*Groan. Sigh. Moan. Lament. Still speechless. She produces a symptom, akin to the hysteric's loss of speech or a little object, such as a bone, stuck in her throat*'.

In September 2011, I was invited to do a keynote speech at the Medical Museion in Copenhagen for the *Sensuous Object* event (peer reviewed). The only constraint was that I should work with an object from the collection for my talk. I chose a hysteric's restraining belt and performed a paper entitled 'The material sensuousness'

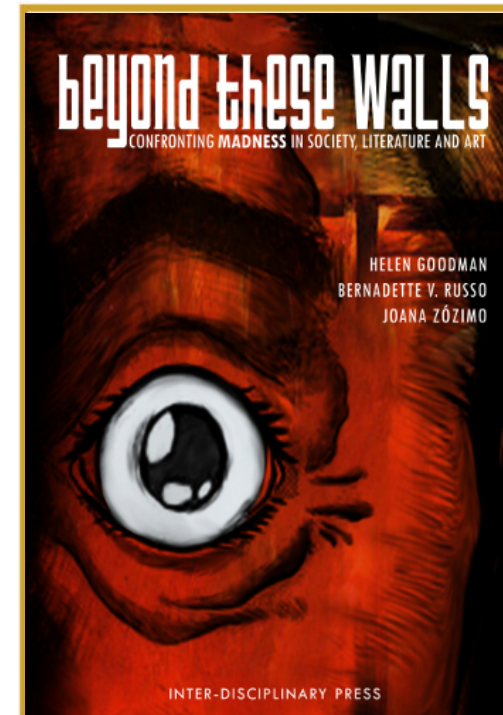


Image five: cover of the eBook *Beyond These Walls*

DISSEMINATION

of a hysteric's performance'. I wore the belt and, after the conference, we created the *Sensuous Object Network*.

In 2012, I worked with Dr Eleanor Bowen on another performative paper entitled 'The Hysteric as Mad'. We wrote in dialogue, as an exquisite corpse, and this was a direct exploration of the findings of *The Scene of a Crime*. We presented it in September 2012 at the 5th Global *Making Sense of Madness* Conference, at Mansfield College, Oxford. The paper, re-titled 'The Hysteric as Mad: Unfolding an Exquisite Corpse', was published in the eBook *Beyond These Walls* (see image five).

The original paper (this time re-titled 'Between Laughter and Crying') was expanded to become a chapter in the book *Madness, Women and the Power of Art*, edited by Frances Davies and myself and published by Inter-Disciplinary Press in 2013.



Image six: Dr Eleanor Bowen and the 'Making Sense of Madness' Conference.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge Francis McKee and Louise Shelley for their support during the editing of *The Scene of a Crime*. Dr Sharon Kivland, from Sheffield Hallam University, Professor Tom Fisher from Nottingham Trent and Professor Steve Dutton, from Lincoln University, provided me with the methodological critique required to make writing part of my research on seduction.

Dr Lucy Lyons' s work on sensuousness and objects was very important for the dissemination of this work.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge Dr Eleanor Bowen, from the University of the Arts London, for her trust in the methodology this work represents and for testing it, with me, in the context of her own *paratexts*.